bid. Hearne Scot. Chron. Prof.

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~~COVENTRY made Free by~~ GODINA, *Countess of* CHESTER.

~~To the Tune of, *Prince* Arthur *died at* Ludlow, &c.~~

Note, *As the Use of these* Old Songs *is very great, in respect that many Children never would have learn'd to* Read, *had they not took a Delight in poring over* Jane Shore, *or* Robin Hood, *&c. which has insensibly stole into them a Curiosity and Desire of Reading other the like Stories, 'till they have improv'd themselves more in a short time than perhaps they would have done in some Years at School: In order still to make them more useful, I premise to affix an* Introduction, *in which I shall point out what is Fact and what is Fiction in each* Song; *which will (as may be readily suppos'd, give not only Children, but Persons of more ripe Years, an Insight into the Reality, Intent and Design, as well as many times the Author and Time when such Song was made, which has not hitherto been explain'd.*

Whether the Generality of our Historians look'd upon the following Story as fabulous, I cannot say; but upon the strictest Search, I could not meet with the least Account of it in any of our English *Writers; I mean those who have left us their Histories in that Tongue.* Leofrick *or* Leofricus, *Duke of* Mercia, *or according to others, Earl of* Chester, *is indeed mentioned by every Writer, who has given us the Life of* Edward *the Confessor; and the Earl is set off by most of them, not only as a brave and wise General, but also as a Saint: And they tell us, he died in an advanced Age, in the Year* 1057, *and the* 15*th of King* Edward. *But as for the History of his Wife, we must have Recourse to* Bromton, *an Abbot, who has left us a* Latin *Chronicle of the most material Transactions in this Island, from the Year* 588 *to* 1198. *By him* Godina, *or as he calls her* Godiva, *is set off as one of the most pious Women of the Age: And he gives us a long Catalogue of the Religious Houses which she founded. The City of* Coventry *at that Time groaned under very heavy Taxes and Duties, which they paid* Leofrick. Godina *taking Pity on them, and seeing to what Poverty they were reduced by these burthensome Taxations, desired her Husband to remit them, which he would by no Means consent to; the* Coventry *Taxes being one of the best Branches of his Revenue: But the Countess still pressing him, he thought to silence her at once, by assuring her that he never would do it, unless she would ride naked from one End of the Town to the other; well knowing the strict Virtue of his Wife, and believing her Modesty would never permit her to think of such a Thing. But she having a fine Head of Hair, comb'd it out, and so weav'd it round her, that no Part of her was left naked, save her Legs. Thus far* Bromton. *But at* Coventry *they tell us another Sort of a Story:* Godina, *say they, commanded that the Windows and Doors of every House should be shut up, whilst she was riding thro' the Town; and that no body should presume to look out under Pain of Death: And a poor Taylor, who would needs be peeping, was struck blind. In Commemoration of which, his Figure, there call'd the* Peeper, *is put in the same Window to this Day: And that of the Lady* Godina *is once a Year carried in Procession thro' every Street in* Coventry.

LEofricus, that Noble Earl
Of *Chester*, as I read,
Did for the City of *Coventry*
Many a noble Deed:
Great Privileges for the Town
This Nobleman did get;
And of all Things did make it so,
That they Tole-free did sit.
Save only that for Horses still
They did some Custom pay,
Which was great Charges to the Town,
Full long and many a Day:
Wherefore his Wife *Godina* fair,
Did of the Earl requeſt,
That thereof he would make it free,
As well as all the reſt:
So when that ſhe long Time had ſued,
Her Purpoſe to obtain;
Her Noble Lord at length ſhe took,
Within a merry Vein;
And unto him with ſmiling Chear,
She did forthwith proceed;
Intreating greatly that he would
Perform this goodly Deed,
You move me much, my Fair, quoth he,
Your Suit I fain would ſhun;
But what will you perform and do,
To have this Matter done?
Why any Thing, my Lord, quoth ſhe,
You will with Reaſon crave;
I will perform it with good Will,
If I my Wiſh might have.
If thou wilt grant the Thing, he ſaid,
That I ſhall now require,
As ſoon as it is finiſhed,
Thou ſhalt have thy Deſire.
Command what you think good, my Lord,
I will thereto agree,
On this Condition, That the Town
For ever may be free.
If thou thy Cloaths ſtrip off,
And here lay them down,
And at Noon-day on Horſe-back ride,
Stark-Naked through the Town;
They ſhall be free for evermore:
If thou wilt not do ſo,
More Liberty than now they have,
I never will beſtow.
The Lady, at his ſtrange Demand,
Was much abaſh'd in Mind;
And yet for to fulfil this Thing,
She never a whit repin'd.
Wherefore unto all Officers
Of the Town ſhe ſent,
That they perceiving her good Will,
Which for the Weal was bent;
That on the Day that ſhe ſhould ride,
All Perſons through the Town,
Should keep their Houſes ſhut, and Doors,
And clap their Windows down;
So that no Creature, young or old,
Should in the Streets be ſeen;
'Till ſhe had ridden all about,
Throughout the City clean;
And when the Day of Riding came,
No Perſon did her ſee,
Saving her Lord; after which Time,
The Town was ever free.

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